

The Church-Inspired LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

by

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SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL once said of his opponent: "Mr. Attlee was a very modest man. He had a great deal to be modest about." As we approach the discussion of any facet of American education, it is well for us to be modest, for there is much to be modest about. Only the most brash would claim to have even some of the answers.

Those of us who have some responsibility in this field should, however, recognize the challenge and try to find some answers, for herein lies the future of our nation and, perhaps, of our free world, which looks to us for leadership.

We should take good care lest we be merely blind leaders of the blind. I think it an understatement to say all is not well in our own nation. Instability or a feeling of insecurity seems to influence life at every turn. It permeates our political, social, economic, industrial, and educational thinking.

Dr. Wriston, president emeritus of Brown University, says, "Security has become the opiate of the people . . . they cease to be

masters of the state, as the democratic thesis demands; they become its wards. When the citizen accepts the government as his guardian, democracy is in decay."

The whole trend of the day is the submergence of the individual into a sort of monolithic social order. We collectively seem to have a passion for the herd.

Rugged individualism has become a bad word—almost a synonym for selfishness. With its passing, there is passing, too, much of our sense of and passion for independence. We seek security above all else.

The growing welfare state has encouraged and contributed largely to this feeling of dependence. The state takes from him who has and gives to him who has not, robbing one of his initiative and the other of his integrity. This is a complete negation of the parable of Jesus.

Gibbon wrote of the Greeks and Romans, "In the end, more than they wanted freedom, they wanted security, they wanted a comfortable life, and they lost it all: security, comfort, and freedom."

I fear greatly that many of our people are today repeating the errors of two thousands years ago.

And Gibbon wrote too, "When the Athenians finally wanted not to give to society, but for society to give to them, when the freedom they wished most for was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free and was never free again."

In the past many nations have risen and fallen, and as the "star of empire" has moved westward, it has left in its path many charred remnants of once great powers which never regained that greatness. Nations seem rarely ever to have a second chance.

Can it be that time is running out on us too? We owe a great debt to the past. Ours is an inheritance of freedom that was won at an enormous sacrifice. At times we seem to have forgot that to maintain that freedom we must be eternally vigilant.

We need not fear a hot war, but of the deadly struggle now going on between two ideologies for the minds of men, we are and should be deeply concerned.

We must somehow rebuild our sense of individual responsibility. There is no such thing as a national purpose or a national mind. The individual purpose and mind, especially of those who are to be our leaders, are of supreme importance and these we must strive to strengthen.

There is a great demand from many quarters today for the Federal government to assume a large part of the responsibility for our system of education. Where responsibility goes, supervision soon follows. Before we permit this to happen, we should read again the advice of

John Adams which is most appropriate, "Where the realm of the spirit and the realm of the mind are concerned, government can exercise sovereignty in only two ways, either as a tyrant or as a bungler."

Until we are willing to assume our full responsibility as individuals we are ill-prepared to meet the tremendous problem of the cold war and the atomic age. No wonder the minds of many thoughtful Americans are greatly disturbed. Somewhere along the line something has gone wrong, and we need to look for the causes. Let us begin by taking a good look at our educational system.

Vice Admiral Rickover in an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* last year entitled "The World of the Uneducated" raises some pertinent questions. He holds that we have quit educating our youth and are only "... training them ... in socially approved manners, mores, and personal appearance."

This is the so-called progressive idea of education, conceived by John Dewey and carried in later years by his disciples to ends that would be ridiculous were they not so tragic. They teach that freedom should be given to the child to plan his own course of study. The teacher is merely a resource person, a senior comrade in a group studying whatever for the moment pleases the child.

William H. Kilpatrick, one of the chief followers of Dewey, is quoted as saying: "The teacher should not make a practice of substituting his purpose and wishes for the child's ... it is the child who should originate tasks and purposes." He wanted no curriculum set in advance to be "foisted" (his word) on the child. The question is posed here, "How can a child born ignorant know what he needs to learn?"

I am much afraid this progressive idea of education is permeating our entire system of secondary education, because so much of it is prevalent in our teachers colleges where how to teach is far more important than what to teach, and where some strange ideas are spawned; for instance, to quote Admiral Rickover: "A class of 600 and more graduate students in education, comprising teachers, principals, and superintendents, vote their opinion in overwhelming numbers that Greek, Latin, and mathematics offered the least likely possibilities for educational growth; and with almost the same unanimity, they placed dancing, dramatics, and doll-playing high on the list in this regard."

Rickover claims further that: "It is tragic that so many American youngsters graduate from high school without being truly literate. Without literacy one cannot communicate with others from whom he is separated by time and space, nor enjoy the treasure locked in good books. Literacy is basic to education, yet our schools have not suc-

ceeded in teaching our children to read with ease, to spell correctly, or to express themselves clearly in writing."

In an article entitled "Educators Need Re-Education," Dorothy Thompson recently wrote: "Today thousands of graduates, even from colleges (especially state colleges), cannot write an intelligible paragraph in English, do not command a vocabulary even on newspaper level, are incapable of making a precis of any book, and cannot quickly and accurately do a problem in compound fractions. This in a country that spends more per capita on the education of its children and youth and houses them more luxuriously than any other nation in the world. And the reply to all criticism is always that we need to spend more money."

I heard a high school principal say a little while ago that a high school diploma often meant only that the child had been enrolled for four years. We have filled up our secondary school curricula with vocational training, shopwork, physical education, home economics, homemaking, selecting a mate, automobile driving, dancing, and, yes, doll-playing.

To these President Whitney Griswold of Yale adds "courses in office training, commercial occupation, effective living, band music, and radio broadcasting." To quote him further, "Athletes majoring in physical education receive course credits in football, handball, elementary swimming, social dancing, rhythms, and fly fishing."

John D. Williams, head of the mathematics division of Rand Corporation, observes, "We have recently placed most of our school system in the hands of people preoccupied with physical culture, togetherness, and intellectually trivial curricula."

One tragic result of this trend in education—or uneducation—is evident in a recent survey conducted in the State of New Jersey among high school seniors on the free enterprise system. Of the students polled

61% did not believe in profits;

62% thought workers should not produce all they could;

53% favored government ownership of banks, railroads, and steel industry;

55% believed in the theory "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

One can but wonder how prevalent is the teaching of this socialistic creed in our schools today.

Still another result is a lack of motivating influence. Only a fifth of our nation's youth goes on to any form of higher education. This

group includes less than half of those best qualified. Of the top quarter in mental ability, 40% drop out for lack of motivation.

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We, in our educational thinking, are suffering from bad ideas. Dr. Griswold says: "The only sure weapon against bad ideas is better ideas. The source of better ideas is wisdom. The surest path to wisdom is a liberal education."

For the past decade at Yale, Dr. Griswold has pleaded constantly for a return to the liberal arts. He holds that the great danger to our freedoms today is the decline of the liberal arts as a force in our national educational system. "These studies," he says, "are disappearing under a layer of vocational and other substitutes like the landscape in the ice age, only this glacier reaches from coast to coast and border to border."

One of the most heartening and hopeful signs of today is that other educators and other schools are awakening to the absolute necessity of the revival of liberal learning.

Somehow in our educational program we have lost the meaning and substance of the real liberal arts education. We have tried to be all things to all people. Economic pressures have forced us to include in our curricula many vocational and preprofessional courses which help the student to earn a living rather than to live a life.

Liberal arts are the arts and studies by which free men can live in and preserve a free society. Liberal learning goes to the whole of man's personality, seeking to enrich it by widening his intellectual horizon. It exacts discipline to liberate the mind and spirit, and builds capacity for self-education.

Jefferson referred to education as the "most legitimate engine of government," and he was a product of the liberal arts. Further, he held that: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

Since the days of Plato and Aristotle, these arts and studies have been sought as the finest system of education for the ideal citizen of the ideal state, a system designed to fit the citizen to bear his responsibilities in a self-governing society. In Dr. Griswold's words: "The freer the society, the greater the responsibilities imposed on the individual citizen, and the greater these responsibilities, the greater the citizen's need for the help of the liberal arts."

Certainly then, we must provide this help for students in our colleges today because in their hands will be tomorrow's responsibility for keeping our nation free and making wise decisions necessary for maintaining our free society.

We elect representatives to go to our state and national capitols to make our laws and spend our money by the billions, who have, in many cases, had no training for the serious tasks they face.

The blame lies largely on an educational system which is too busy teaching our future citizens how to use their hands and not their heads and hearts. We have not taught them how to live as free men in a free self-governing society.

It was not so with the founding fathers of our nation. They were thoroughly grounded in an educational system founded on the liberal arts. Jefferson, Adams, Madison, and their contemporaries had read widely after the great minds of two millenia. They knew of the eternal struggle by which men had kept themselves free, and from history they knew how easy it was for men to lose their freedom.

An idea of the mental training of Jefferson can be found in a letter written to his nephew, Peter Carr, in 1785:

I advise you to begin a course of ancient history, reading everything in the original . . . the following books in order: Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon's *Anabasis*, Arrian, Quintus Curtius, Diodorus Siculus, and Justin.

This shall form the first stage of your historical reading . . .

The next will be of Roman history:

Livy, Sallust, Caesar, Cicero's *Epistles*, Suetonius, Tacitus, and Gibbon.

In Greek and Latin poetry, you . . . will read:

Virgil, Terence, Horace, Anacreon, Theocritus, Homer, Euripides, and Sophocles.

In morality, read:

Epictetus, Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Plato's Socratic dialogues, Cicero's philosophies, Antonius, and Seneca.

I repeat: these were to be read in the originals. Our modern youth would be somewhat appalled at such a schedule; and yet, I wonder what would be the reaction to the curriculum of the Gymnasium in Basle, Switzerland, required for graduation:

Latin, 8 years; Greek, 5 years; German, 8 years; French, 7 years; mathematics, 8 years; history, 8 years; geography and geology, 8 years; botany and zoology, 4½ years; physics, 2 years; chemistry, 1 year; art, 3½ years; penmanship, 2 years; music, 2 years; physical training, 8 years. To round out a thirty-five hour weekly program, pupils are given a choice of two years of Hebrew, English, Italian, or descriptive geometry.

Surely, American schools have a great deal to be modest about. The genius of our early Americans with their liberal arts training

gave us the freedom of a republic. Our problem is to keep it. As this republic evolves into a democracy, our freedom can only be kept as we train all our citizens to make wise decisions for the good of our whole nation.

There is nothing today more important than a broad general education in liberal arts. The technician knows his own narrow field, but he can rarely see beyond that field to the full picture. John Stuart Mill said: "Men are men before they are lawyers and physicians . . . if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers and physicians."

The medieval liberal arts curriculum included grammar, rhetoric and logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. To these were added such studies as language, literature, philosophy, the fine arts and history. And still later were properly added the sciences and social studies.

In the minds of some, the term liberal arts is limited to the earliest classical meaning. Scientific knowledge in that day was limited. With the expansion of such knowledge, it became necessary that the concept be greatly broadened.

"The ultimate aim of pure science," says Dr. Griswold, "is not technology—but to understand and explain the universe in which man lives."

In England, the physicist C. P. Snow sees a dangerous division in learning between the scientific and the literary cultures. He believes this gap must be closed because when the two have grown apart "no society is going to be able to think with wisdom."

The position of John Stuart Mill was "to vindicate the high educational value alike of the old classics and the new scientific studies, and to insist," and please understand this is a direct quotation, "that it is only the stupid inefficiency of the usual teaching which makes these studies be regarded as competitors instead of allies."

There is a great difference between the theorist or the pure scientist and the technician. Pure science is back of all real advance. The thinking of the master theorist gave us the magic formula $E = mc^2$. That theory sent thousands of technicians to the laboratory to test and prove and develop it. The theorist is far out in front pointing the way for others to follow.

A nation that produces only technicians is doomed to a secondary position. The place of the natural sciences in the liberal arts curriculum is certainly co-equal with the literary.

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True liberal arts education leads to understanding and discipline. The human mind is not easily subject to discipline; hence, the power

of the human mind is largely lost. It is so easy just not to think, for thinking is an effort.

Thinking requires long arduous exercise of mental powers, yet in compensation it promises unequaled excitement and satisfaction. Ask any true researcher who has sought to delve deeply into the secrets of this infinite universe. He knows for he has learned to think God's thoughts after Him.

Anyone reading after any of the great philosophers is struck with the depth of the penetration of their thinking. Even after they have blazed a wide trail, it is difficult for our undisciplined minds to follow them, and we can do so only with absolute concentration.

The potentials of the mind are almost unlimited. While there are no two alike, in every one is a wealth of unused ability. One is amazed when trying to follow the Theory of Relativity, at the enormous reaches of the mind of an Einstein. But how many potential Einsteins have walked the ways of time and mediocrity because they have not developed their God-given intellects?

So, education should start with mental discipline. The ancients started with mathematics and astronomy, an effort to reduce all the immensity of natural phenomena to mathematical formulae. They gave us two great classical languages, which in themselves are great fields for mental discipline.

This discipline comes the hard way. I hope you remember when first you were called on to solve an original problem in mathematics. You had to have certain tools with which to work. You had to know all the rules and theorems that preceded. You had learned those rules step by step. At first you had been led along, every step being pointed out to you. All you had to do was to follow. Then one day you were put on your own. You were required to think through the problem for yourself. You had to reach back in the storehouse of your mind and select those tools you needed for that particular problem. I can even now remember the thrill of satisfaction that came with the realization that I could do that.

That was, of course, the beginning, and the further you went into the subject, the broader the field became and the easier it became for the mind to find its way through the maze. The few beginning rules became a very great number and they became your servants subject to your command.

The learning of a classical language is a further mental discipline. In translating any selection from Greek or Latin literature, it is necessary to carry in your mind, not just a few forms and rules, not just a few hundred, but literally thousands of forms and rules and meanings

and to have them so thoroughly a part of your mental supply that a glance at the word immediately places it subject to your use and understanding.

I can testify that classical languages are not learned without mental concentration for long hours. I know too that if one sticks at it long enough, there comes a supplemental power. The long distance runner learns to endure the tortures of exhaustion until he gets what he knows as his second wind; then he runs along again easily.

In a similar way one can study through mental exhaustion until there comes a freshness of mental grasp and activity that makes problems almost easy of solution.

I have a further theory. The mental process by which a mathematical problem is solved or a language translated is the same mental process needed for the successful management of any business. There are certain rules which one must know and carry with him to the solution of any business problem. These rules are not easily catalogued. At times they seem to come almost subconsciously, but given certain facts or stimuli, they almost thrust themselves forward as tools ready for use.

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One of the great problems which all liberal arts colleges must first face is the weakness in the beginnings of the liberal arts in the secondary schools, as a consequence of which there is a wide gap between the ability of the high school graduate and the entrance requirements of any self-respecting liberal arts curriculum.

We must maintain these high requirements and at the same time inspire and instruct our secondary school systems to meet them.

Our liberal arts colleges must therefore train teachers with the emphasis on the importance and understanding of liberal learning so that the existing gap can be filled. It is highly important that we not only strengthen our departments of education, but that we enlarge them as rapidly as possible to give graduate work leading to a masters degree in teaching.

I believe that this is peculiarly the task of the church-inspired college. The church kept liberal learning alive and nurtured it through the Dark Ages. It was the church that brought the liberal arts to America in the early days and for many years the church alone was the guardian of higher education.

While it is true that in recent years the state has taken over the major part of our higher education, yet the two systems, public and private, need each other.

The private church-related college has in the past set and must

continue to set the quality standard, both intellectually and morally. Our separation of church and state has undeniably set the pattern in our state colleges toward materialism. So the church college must never abdicate its responsibility nor its opportunity. Nor must it ever lose its spiritual inspiration.

Bertrand Russell has recently given a very powerful argument for moral education, which is, in reality, Christian education. He begins by stretching our minds both as to space and time as they relate to this universe of ours.

This galaxy, our milky way, he tells us, is made up of some 300 billion stars, the nearest star being four light years, or twenty-five trillion miles away. Our galaxy, as large as it is, is only one of many million such clusters which go to make up our universe. The more distant galaxies are wheeling away into outer space at speeds in excess of the speed of light. With our most powerful telescopes we can see objects so far away that the light from them has taken 500 million years to reach us.

The current belief of astronomers is that our entire universe is expanding far beyond our powers of conception.

Drawing a parallel here, Russell says that as the universe has been expanding so has our mental ability been expanding. In the past, the destruction that could be wrought by evil men was limited by their knowledge. Nero could set fire to Rome just to see it burn. Hitler could sacrifice continental Europe to satisfy his insane egotism. Did you ever stop to think what Hitler might have done with a hydrogen bomb? And his scientists almost had it.

The day is almost, if not quite, here when an irresponsible evil mind could destroy the entire race and all life on this planet.

Russell does not agree with Socrates that if we all had enough knowledge we would all behave perfectly. He would teach men wisdom, which is something beyond material knowledge. "Such wisdom," he says, "is more precious than rubies." To quote again: "The world needs this kind of wisdom as it has never needed it before. If mankind can acquire it, our new powers over nature offer a prospect of happiness—as men have never experienced. If mankind cannot, every increase in cleverness will bring us only nearer to irretrievable disaster."

Our only hope is in moral responsibility. Here is a definite challenge to our church-inspired colleges. Only they can restore to our world a wisdom which alone can be its salvation.

Albert Einstein, who has been called an atheist, wrote: "My religion consists of an humble admiration of the illimitable, superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive

with our frail, feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God." I am persuaded that Einstein was not far from the Kingdom of Heaven.

As we try to understand this universe from the microcosm to the immensity of the macrocosm, and, as we realize that the human mind has torn asunder the atom and released that infinite power locked within, and that the human mind has also measured the radius of the universe as 35 billion light years, then our frail, feeble minds begin faintly to appreciate the infinite greatness of the Creator: GOD.

Galileo held that this universe is centered on God or nothing. If the latter, there can be neither reasonable faith nor sensible philosophy. Hence, he turns, as real science must, to God. His words, the beginning of modern science, call us back to faith and hope and true belief.

Rule God out and only blind chance remains. Rule out a divine purpose, and creation loses all meaning. It is God's truth we seek. It is God's law we try to understand. It is God's purpose back of it all, else life becomes empty and meaningless.

To teach of nature without Nature's God is to rob the day of its sunshine. And since it is Nature's God we seek, we may expect to find Him anywhere and everywhere. Tennyson bore witness to this as he wrote of the flower in the crannied wall:

*Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.*

Many of the world's great have found faith sufficient unto themselves in surveying the infinite reaches of God's universe and in the infinite care of the Creator for His creation.

In the distant stars shining down on the Judean hills, David found his faith and sang:

*The heavens declare the glory of God.
The firmament showeth His handiwork.*

Chancellor Marsh tells a story of a father and son out on a hunt. Watching a wild duck disappear in the distance, the father began that quotation from Bryant:

*Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.*

After a moment's pause, the son took up the lines where the father had stopped:

*He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way, that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.*

Great minds have thought deeply before us. They have left their conclusions and convictions in immortal words that are our heritage if we want them to be.

The pages of the past are filled with both wisdom and error. Only those who know the past can use its wisdom and avoid a repetition of its error. To that past the liberal arts are the open sesame.

By drinking deeply of this fountain of wisdom, we too can acquire that understanding that shall carry us through doubt to an unyielding faith in the God of Infinite Creation. Then will life have depth and meaning.

By all means, let us go back to the liberal arts. But that is not enough. They must be made complete by an unshaken faith in the good life. Let us build and preserve our great liberal arts colleges, the Almae Matres of free men, and let us keep them church-inspired and divinely led.

And let us do it now before it is too late! "That," in Lincoln's words, "this nation under God might have a new birth of freedom."

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